

Preface

As the constitutionally created policy-setting body for the California courts, the Judicial Council of California is working with all trial and appellate courts in California to achieve five overarching long-range goals.¹ They are:

- Goal I. Access, Fairness, and Diversity.** Improve access, fairness, and diversity in the judicial branch.
- Goal II. Independence and Accountability.** Ensure the institutional independence of the judiciary as a separate branch of government, secure the resources necessary for its support, and protect the independence of judicial decision-making.
- Goal III. Modernization.** Modernize judicial administration practices.
- Goal IV. Quality of Justice and Service to the Public.** Promote the quality of justice by providing services to the public that meet their needs and enhance their understanding of and support for the judicial branch.
- Goal V. Education.** Achieve the goals of the Judicial Council through judicial branch education and professional development.

As an integral part of *Goal IV, Quality of Justice and Service to the Public*, the council recognizes the need for courts to “promote the quality of justice by providing services to the public that meet their needs and enhance their understanding of and support for the judicial branch.” Statewide efforts to implement this objective were initiated in April 1997 when Chief Justice Ronald M. George appointed the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach with the purpose of helping the courts to reach out to the public to improve relations between the courts and the communities they serve.

The charge given to the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach was to:

- I. *Conduct fact-finding efforts* by:**
 - Surveying existing California and national court community outreach models;
 - Seeking information from selected experts on the topic of court and community outreach; and
 - Identifying the impact, benefits, and constraints experienced from such programs.
- II. *Identify areas of needed community outreach in California* and agencies or groups with which the courts could collaborate;**

¹ *Leading Justice Into the Future*, The Long-Range Strategic Plan of the Judicial Council of California (1997).



- III. ***Identify any applicable ethical constraints*** that would affect the involvement of individual judges and court staff in community outreach programs and activities;
- IV. ***Identify the role the Judicial Council and the Administrative Office of the Courts should play*** in supporting court community outreach efforts;
- V. ***Develop recommendations for standards of judicial administration, rules of court, or other guidelines*** for development of court community outreach programs;
- VI. ***Produce a handbook*** that will serve as a resource directory for model court community outreach programs and a guide for developing such programs; and
- VII. ***Conduct regional training programs*** to train court personnel in creating and administering community outreach programs.

This handbook, developed by the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach, is intended to provide guidance and resource information on the development of community outreach programs as requested in charges II, III, and VI above. The task force submitted its *Final Report to the Judicial Council* in February 1999, recommending statewide actions to be taken to encourage and develop outreach. For copies of this report, please contact Jack Urquhart at 415-865-7654; jack.urquhart@jud.ca.gov.



Acknowledgments

The development of this handbook is the culmination of a journey that began decades ago with national research regarding public trust and confidence in the courts. Over eighteen months of dedicated service have gone into the preparation of this handbook, including extensive research, discussion, listening, learning, and collaboration among members of the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach, Administrative Office of the Courts staff, consultants, and task force member staff assistants.

Each member of the task force made a significant contribution to this handbook. Hon. Veronica Simmons McBeth, Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Municipal Court and a nationally recognized leader in court community outreach efforts, provided leadership as the chair of the task force. Members included not only state and federal judges and court administrators, but also a broad range of representatives from the bar, other governmental agencies, and many community organizations from around the state.

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The task force specifically wishes to acknowledge the assistance received from many different individuals and organizations in conducting the research, analysis, and preparation of this handbook, including the following.

The leadership. It is the visionary leadership of Chief Justice Ronald M. George, the Judicial Council of California, and Administrative Director of the Courts William C. Vickrey that provided the impetus for this project. The task force wants to acknowledge these individuals for their willingness to encourage and support the courts and this task force in directly addressing issues of public trust and confidence in the justice system.

The courts. The courts in California and throughout the United States responded to inquiries from the task force to identify effective court community outreach programs currently in place. Without the time and information contributed by these many sources, this handbook would not have been possible. The task force also gratefully acknowledges those judges and court executive officers and staff who took the time to provide information about their court's activities in person at task force meetings throughout the state.

Members of the public. At each task force meeting, members of the public were invited to provide comment regarding suggestions for improvements in court community collaboration. The task force wants to thank all of those individuals and organizations that attended meetings throughout California to provide their important and unique perspectives to the work of the task force.

The National Center for State Courts. The initial impetus for research and problem solving in the broad area of public trust and confidence and court and community collaboration has been led nationally by the National Center for State Courts. The task force thanks Roger K. Warren, President, David Rottman, Pamela Casey, and the justice system leaders from around the United States who have served as members of the Executive Session on Court and Community Collaboration for their leadership in this arena. Their thinking, research, and writing have contributed substantially to the comprehensive scope and nature of this handbook.

Other national organizations. The court and community collaboration work of the American Bar Association's (ABA's) Office of Justice Initiatives; Hon. Richard Fruin, Los Angeles Superior Court, immediate past-chair of the ABA's Judicial Division; the American Judicature Society; and the U.S. Department of Justice was of great assistance to the development of the ideas and programs included in this handbook.

Task force member assistants. Several members of the task force volunteered the time of their staff to assist in the research and development of this handbook. The task force acknowledges the contribution of these individuals: John Puente (Department of Social



Services), Rachel Gallardo (Court of Appeal, Second District), and Craig Marin (Los Angeles Municipal Court).

California Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER). In collaboration with the task force, CJER began development of the curriculum for a judicial and executive training course entitled “Courts and Community Relations.” The pilot course, held June 25–26, 1998, in San Diego, provided useful ideas and feedback to task force members and staff. Special thanks go to Karen Moen for her oversight of this course development. This curriculum, as refined, will be used for training court personnel statewide regarding the “how to” of court community outreach programs.

Contract writer. The court community outreach survey conducted by the task force created a wealth of information. To organize and develop this information, the Administrative Office of the Courts contracted a professional writer, Ms. Deborah Medvick, to develop the draft format for this handbook and to write the initial draft descriptions, tools, and samples for the programs identified by the task force. The initial material prepared by Ms. Medvick provided a strong foundation upon which task force staff members were able to build in finalizing this handbook.

California Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Staff. Many members of AOC staff contributed to the final version of this handbook. In particular, the task force wishes to thank Janet Grove for legal research, Suzanne Bean for graphic design, Barry Lynch for providing his insights on several early versions, and Jack Urquhart for administrative support. Finally, the task force wants to acknowledge the significant contributions made by AOC project staff Shelley M. Stump, Planning Coordinator, and Katy Locker, Staff Analyst.

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